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Quandary - Present state of Parties - 1827

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FROM

Hon. John Gorham Palfrey

SOME
SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
Present State of Parties,
WITH REGARD TO THE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION;
WITH
The Author's own case
FAIRLY STATED,
AND SUBMITTED TO ALL CANDID AND COMPASSIONATE MEN.

BY CHRISTOPHER QUANDARY.

RICHMOND:
PRINTED BY THOMAS W. WHITE,
Opposite the Bell Tavern.

1827.

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Gift of
Hon. John Gorham Palfrey,
Cambridge,
(H. C. 1875.)

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

I am a Virginian born and bred—about half-educated in my youth, to say the most for myself—and ever since I attained to manhood, far from having time or opportunity to cultivate my mind, the only serious business of my life has been to earn a living. This, however, has not hindered me from continually dabbling in politics; though no other sources of political information have ever been accessible to me, but the casual conversation of others concerning public affairs, and the newspapers. To fall in company with a Member of Congress or a Printer (the two classes of men whom I venerate above all others) good natured enough to answer all the questions, which my eagerness for knowledge never fails on such occasions to suggest, has always afforded me such exquisite gratification, that I dare say, such gentlemen, if they could have any idea of it, would, out of pure benevolence, be less anxious than they usually are to get rid of me: but in proportion as I am disposed to *court their* society, they seem disposed to *cut mine*: so that I have ever found my chief delight in the study of the newspapers, which are the only things in the world, communicative and patient enough for me. And, as my curiosity is unbounded, so also is my credulity: I am apt to believe every thing I hear, and especially every thing I see in print. The consequence is (as will readily be imagined) that I am every moment changing my opinions; veering, like a weathercock, not only with the gusts and squalls that so often agitate our political atmosphere, but with the gentlest breeze that blows. I have often entertained the most opposite and contradictory opinions, in the course of the same hour: yet I can most conscientiously affirm, that I have been al-

ways most sincerely solicitous to ascertain the truth, and to uphold it, if I could ascertain it. This peculiar temper of mine—insatiable curiosity, perfect impartiality and implicit faith combined—has often caused me much uneasiness, and has recently thrown me into such a state of perplexity, that I am well nigh gone distracted ; so that I feel an irresistible impulse to lay my unhappy case before my fellow-citizens, from whom, if I may not hope relief, I may expect sympathy or at least mercy.

The presidential election is now the only political interest that engages the public attention, and the only topic of discussion. It seems to be agreed on all hands, that Mr. Adams and Gen. Jackson will be the only candidates before the people. I would fain hear all that can be said on both sides, and hold fast to the best : *but which is the best ?* that is the question ; or rather, to me, the puzzle. If but a moiety of the praise, which the friends of these two gentlemen respectively lavish on their favorite, be allowed to have any foundation in truth, I defy the wit of man to determine which is the more worthy : if a tythe of the censure, which the friends of each bestow upon the other, be just, then he that can determine which of the two is the most unfit for the high station to which they are both aspiring, must have a far nicer faculty of discrimination than has fallen to my lot. I *think* the people at large, I *am sure* the people in my part of the country, regard the contest in the latter point of view ; for ninety-nine out of an hundred of those I converse with, only tell me which they are going to vote *against*, not which they are going to vote *for*. I have rarely heard any man descanting on the good qualities of either : I hear hundreds daily inveighing against the faults of both. This may be owing, perhaps, to a trait in the human character which has often been remarked—that the salt, pepper, vinegar and spice, with which *satire* is seasoned,

make it grateful to the palate of the generality of men ; whereas *panegyrick* is always insipid, and (when living characters are the subject) often intolerably nauseous and disgusting. It is my opinion, founded on daily and close observation, that far the greater part of those who have made up their minds to vote *against* Mr. Adams, only read, or only heed, the objections that are urged against him with so much force and vehemence, by the opposition newspapers ; and that most of those who have resolved to vote *against* Gen. Jackson at any rate, give their whole attention, or at least their whole confidence, to the awful censures denounced against his character and conduct by the ministerial prints. But for me, studious to read and hear all that is said on both sides—inquisitive, credulous, impartial—how am I to decide, which to vote *against* or which to vote *for*?

In order to make the state of distressing perplexity in which I find myself, perfectly intelligible to my countrymen, permit me (if it be possible) to *force* the public attention (for it will never be voluntarily given) to the *praises* which the panegyrists of the two competitors have heaped, and are hourly accumulating, each upon their favorite ; and then to recapitulate the *principal objections* against them both, which are resounding through the land : arranging both the praise and the blame (that they may make distinct impressions on others minds as they have made on my own) under three general heads—their political character—their public services—their personal virtues and accomplishments, vices and defects.

I begin with the *Eulogies* : and 1st, as to their *political character*. The *friends of Mr. Adams* represent him to us, as the most upright, disinterested and profound statesman, that ever adorned any age or country ; especially skilled in the science of diplomacy, and in all the foreign relations of the nation : gifted by nature with a quick and sure judg-

ment to discern what is best in all emergencies, which has been improved by an excellent education, and by long experience in the weightiest public affairs; and with unequalled powers of reasoning, to explain the most complex operations of government to the plainest understanding, and to justify the most doubtful to the best: having no aim but his country's weal, and knowing no means but truth, reason and justice: shrewd as Franklin; prudent as Jefferson; gentle as Madison; firm as Monroe; and ardent in his country's cause as his own father: and withal, one of the soundest republicans in the nation—for proof of which last trait in his character, they refer to this known fact in his history—that he joined the *republican* party in 1807, renouncing and denouncing the *federalists*, out of horror of their odious principles and projects; thus giving the finishing blow to the one, and bringing a vast accession of strength to the other party. The *friends of Gen. Jackson* ascribe to him the sum total of all that is great and good, in one word—*he is another WASHINGTON*—whom Corruption durst never approach, even with the proffer of her aid to entice others to their good. For proof of his devotion to our republican institutions, they refer to the acknowledged fact, that he has never, when occasion required, shunned the awful responsibility of violating particular provisions of the Constitution, in order to save the whole system from destruction: and to prove his qualifications for the presidency, they adduce this convincing argument—that as he has resigned the offices of a Judge in his own State and of a Senator of the U. States, from a sense of the unfitness of his temper and talents for such stations, we may therefore be sure, that he would never have aspired to the presidency, if he were not conscious that he possesses the suitable qualifications for the office. 2ndly, of the *public services of Mr. Adams*, his friends (it must be confessed) have not as yet thought it worth while to give a

very particular account. They only remind us, in general, that he has been in the public service from his earliest manhood; and that he "has had the confidence and applause of Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, in the most important civil posts, pronounced by them all to be a wise statesman and an honest man;" not to mention the unbounded admiration of his father, the elder Adams, who now (since party heats have subsided) is universally acknowledged to have been a wise and virtuous statesman. *The friends of Gen. Jackson*, enter boldly into the detail of *his public services*; and thus, for the present (I think), have gained some advantage upon this point. They remind us, that he has been the Hero of two wars; that in the late war, he almost exterminated the Creek Indians, "whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions," and who moreover held an unreasonably large extent of valuable territory; and that, above all, by his skill and prowess, he repelled a superior army of ruthless invaders, disappointed them of the *beauty and booty* of New Orleans, preserved that most important city, the key of the Western States, and thereby in effect preserved the integrity of the empire. 3rdly, When I read the accounts, which have been given to the world, on unquestionable authority, of *the personal virtues and accomplishments* of these two illustrious men, I can find nothing wanting in the character of either, to entitle him to the love, respect, and veneration of all mankind. Mr. Adams, *according to his friends*, is a man of the purest morals, the utmost republican simplicity of manners, calm dignity, serene temper, incorruptible integrity; an accomplished scholar, and the most brilliant rhetorician and eloquent writer of the age. On the other hand, *the friends of Gen. Jackson*, assure us, that he is a man of the most heroic courage, terrible indeed to the foes of his country, whether foreign or domestic, whether found in the

ranks of an invading army or in a Hartford Convention, "but to those men, who seek him, sweet as summer;" of an energy, to meet and conquer all difficulties; one of those rare men, who need not the adventitious aid of education—"whom nature made a great man, and endowed with a capacity of mind, and a strength and quickness of judgment, which qualify him for any exigency of human affairs." In fine, we are told (in a truly classical strain of praise) that he is another *Cincinnatus*; who, called from his plough to defend his country in her utmost need, won for her, safety, peace and glory; then nobly resigned his high command, and retired to his farm.—How is it possible for a man like me, to choose between two such august characters, which to vote *for*? When I read their praises, my bosom swells with the moral sublime, and I say with the poet—"let great Timotheus yield the prize, or both divide the crown"—but my understanding rebukes my feelings for this folly—for neither will yield the prize, and as to dividing the crown, that, I take it, is unconstitutional.

Now, let us look at the *reverse* of each of these pictures; and I must think, that every man, who believes that the portraits resemble the originals in a single line or feature, and who has any love or pride of country in his heart, must turn away, with horror and loathing, from them both, as from a Gorgon's head. 1st, *The opponents of Mr. Adams* represent *his political character*, as the basest and most contemptible that can be imagined. According to them, his abandonment of the federal party in 1807, was a vile apostacy, induced by no dislike of their opinions, by no preference for the republican party, by no love of country, but solely by the hope of some advantage to himself; for he continued, and is still, a latitudinarian and ultra-federalist in heart and principle, as every message he has sent to Congress avows, and the whole course of his administration proves. *The treason de-*

served a *suitable* reward; the *traitor* is entitled to no respect, and worthy of no trust. He is destitute, not only of practical wisdom, but of common sense in public business; in consequence of which his political conduct has been one tissue of blunders: he lost the colonial trade by the grossest of blunders: the Panama mission was the most ridiculous of blunders: his quarrel with Georgia was the most wicked and pernicious of blunders. And as to his pretensions to republicanism, let their sincerity be tested by the claim he makes, to derive his authority, not from the people or the constitution, but *jure divino* from God. *Against all this, the opponents of General Jackson* offer a full set-off: they insist, that he is as much a latitudinarian in his politics as Mr. Adams, and refer to his votes in the Senaté to prove the fact: that he is a mere military chieftain, without the least knowledge of civil affairs, or the slightest regard for civil liberty: that he has never been trusted with power which he did not abuse, disdaining all subordination and all limits of law and constitution, and boldly erecting himself into a military despot, as a matter of right and even of duty. And, while they contend, that the charge against Mr. Adams, that he derives the powers of government *from God*, is a malicious falsehood, they assert, that Gen. Jackson has evinced by his whole conduct, in a manner not to be mistaken, that he considers *the sword*, the only source, the only instrument, and the only measure, of authority; which is one and the same thing as to derive title to authority *from the Devil*. 2dly, as to the *public services* of the two men—The *opponents of Mr. Adams* admit, that he has been enjoying a public salary for the greater part of his life; but they ask, with great show of confidence, What distinguished act of public service has he ever rendered? They admit, as I remember, only one—his

able defence of Gen. Jackson's conduct in the Seminole War; yet some have thought, that if that celebrated defence was meritorious in itself, its motive was selfish and vicious; that it was dictated by a desire to conciliate General Jackson's favor, and influence in the West, in support of his own pretensions to the presidency. On the other side, while *the friends of Mr. Adams* cannot give any well vouchered account of the distinguished public services of their favorite, History being most provokingly silent on that head; and while *the opponents of General Jackson* are obliged to admit, that *he* has "done the State some service," which History has taken great pains to record: yet these do not scruple to affirm, that the laurels he acquired by his victory over the Creeks, were such as only a savage warrior can envy—red with blood, most cruelly and wantonly shed: that the lustre of the victory of New Orleans, was tarnished by such outrages against the constitution and the laws, as left the liberty of the people he had defended, prostrate and bleeding in the dust—the state legislature turned out of doors—martial law proclaimed—the writ of *habeas corpus* suspended—and judges brought to trial before a court martial, for discharging their duty according to their oaths of office: that, even after the war was in fact at an end, he caused six militia-men to be executed, for differing in opinion with him and his court martial, on the construction of the militia laws; wherein the opinion of the poor men was right, and that of the general and his court martial, plainly wrong: that during his Seminole campaign, he violated the laws of civilized warfare, transcended the orders of his own government, insulted the State authorities of Georgia, and in open contempt of the Constitution of the U. States, waged war against Spain; and whereas most of these last mentioned violences of his competitor were vindicated and justified by Mr. Adams, *his friends* now implore us to remember,

that that vindication was, *in form*, addressed to the government of Spain; which, they insist, is an ample apology to Mr. Adams, for justifying, in the face of the world and before high heaven, conduct which admits of no excuse. 3rdly, Against *the personal character and qualifications, the private life and morals*, of the two high contending parties, the most sweeping sentence of condemnation has been fulminated. The *opponents of Mr. Adams* assert, that he is the father of that ridiculous system of etiquette, which is now established at the court of Washington; that, for all his canting affectation of purity, he purchased a billiard table at an enormous expense, as soon as he came into office, and, to the scandal of the nation, set it up in the palace provided for him by the public; that he assumed the payment of Mrs. Moulson's rent to Mr. Kerr, took a mortgage of the poor woman's effects for his indemnity, and then threatened to plead *her* coverture, to exonerate himself from the obligation of *his* endorsement of her note; that he is opiniative, obstinate, petulant, wanting in even the manners of a gentleman. I thought it was admitted by his enemies (and, I own, the admission surprised me) that he is an able and elegant writer; "a scholar and a ripe and good one:" but I have lately been credibly informed, that, taking his Baltimore toast and speech in connection with his 4th of July oration, "we are justified in the conclusion, that he has been in every respect far overrated, *but more so in reference to his literary character than any other.*" The *opponents of Gen. Jackson* assure the public, that his youth and the prime of his manhood were exhausted in Card-playing, Horse-racing, and Brawling; and that, in a duel provoked by his own insolence, after receiving his adversary's fire unhurt, he grated his teeth and buttoned his coat, deliberately walked up to that now defenceless adversary, put his pistol to his breast, and (in Mr. Adams's phrase) "sped the bullet to his heart."

Moreover, *they do say*, that this great man is so illiterate, that he cannot spell the commonest words in the language. There is yet another topic concerning the private life of the General, which (tho' I fully intended to sum up all) decency and manly feeling forbid me to repeat. In short, the zealous partizans of Mr. Adams represent Gen. Jackson as a *d—n'd brutal ruffian*, and those of Gen. Jackson represent Mr. Adams as a *mean s—n of a b—ch*. This is very vulgar language, I know; but it is language which I have often heard, and truly there is no polite language that would exactly express the thought, which the invectives I daily read and hear, convey to my mind. How can *such a man* as nature, education and habit, have made *me*, determine which of these *consummately bad men* I ought to vote *against*?

Finding it impossible, whether I looked at the bright or at the dark side of the characters of the two men, as portrayed by the most intelligent and candid of their respective friends and enemies, to determine which is the better or which the worse; and being most anxious to find relief from so painful a suspense of judgment on this deeply interesting subject; I bethought me, that, as the friends of Mr. Adams assure me his penetration and candor are worthy of all confidence, and the friends of Gen. Jackson commend his judgment of men and things as intuitive and infallible; if, therefore, I could find out the opinions these gentlemen entertain of each other, I should have a sure and easy method of forming a correct estimate of their respective merits and demerits. Into this inquiry, then, I resolved to enter; but I found Disappointment standing at the very gate. All the deadly sins of which Gen. Jackson has been accused, were committed *before* the last presidential election. But Mr. Adams, in his inaugural speech, spoke of him in terms of the highest respect and veneration, and *did most devoutly wish*, that it were possible the choice between the general and

himself could have been submitted to the people. Yes, it is certain Mr. Adams *then expressed* a favorable opinion of his competitor. Can it be supposed, that he *now* entertains any such opinion? that he now dissents from those sentiments towards Gen. Jackson, of strong abhorrence, which *all his own friends, high and low, feel, and to promote his success* are propagating with all their might? Or was that passage in that solemn inaugural speech, a mere flourish of rhetoric? On the other hand, I have always understood, that when Mr. Adams was elected to the presidency, Gen. Jackson took prompt occasion to testify to him, in the most conspicuous manner, his respect and congratulation; conduct, which I willingly attributed to his magnanimity. But *now* I infer from Gen. Jackson's letter to Mr. Beverley, that he had, at that very time, the strongest grounds to suspect, nay almost to know, that Mr. Adams owed his election to a corrupt bargain with Mr. Clay, by which Mr. Clay agreed to give him the Presidency, on condition that Mr. Adams should appoint Mr. Clay to the Department of State, and to the hopes of the succession in the line of safe precedents.

It next occurred to me, that I might find among the *friends or opponents* of the two candidates, some one man, on one side or the other, on whom I might securely pin my faith. To that object I bent my endeavours. But here I was assured by the *opponents* of the administration, that the ministerial party is "*a corrupt coalition,*" openly employing, to retain power, the same corrupt means by which they acquired it; and by the *opponents* of General Jackson, that the opponents of Mr. Adams are "*a factious and unprincipled opposition*"—"resting, in fact, on personal jealousy and malice against the Secretary of State, heightened if not originating from hunger for office." Macon, Tazewell, Randolph, actuated by *jealousy of Mr. Clay*, and by *hunger for office!* I can only wring my hands, like King James II., and cry, "God help me!" I am

going now for *men*, not *principles*; and for Virginians born, if I can find them, because I know them best. Some bid me “seek for the bold, frank, manly character of Henry Clay, risen, like America herself, from *plebeian* origin, to a high elevation and to a fair chance of a higher destiny.” [I pause a moment to ask, what that word *plebeian* means? Does it only mean, that Mr. Clay was not descended from a *lawyer*, *printer*, *deputy sheriff* or *overseer*? These are the only privileged classes I know in Virginia, where he was born.] On the other hand, it has been proved to me, by cogent argument coming from the same neighborhood, that Mr. Clay owes his present station to the most shameless corruption—to his dexterity in *log-rolling* (to borrow a very expressive Kentucky metaphor). Some assure me, that Mr. Secretary Barbour is every way worthy of the Vice-presidency; others, that he is (in his own far resounding language) *an empty barrel*. And (to my unspeakable surprise and dismay) I have lately been informed, that Mr. Tazewell is a mere sophist, or rather a *Belial*, who can “make the worse appear the better reason, to perplex and dash maturest counsels;” and Mr. Randolph, “a combination of English arrogance, grafted on a petty stock of princely Indian descent, the growth of every barbarous tribe.” One asserts, that Governor Giles is the devil incarnate; and another boldly vouches Mr. Madison as the witness to prove it; yet Mr. Madison says *he* has never smelt any brimstone about him, nor seen horns, tail or cloven foot.—At one moment, evidence is adduced to me, to prove that Mr. Jefferson thought the election of General Jackson the only means left us to preserve the Constitution in its purity, as a government of limited powers: at the next, I am assured, that it can be proved in a court of justice, that Mr. Jefferson thought General Jackson a bull dog that ought to be tied up in times of peace,

So I was forced to relinquish all hope of finding any *statesman* to track after. Whither, then, should I betake me? Surely, I thought, I can find some honest editor of a newspaper, whose opinion has been formed on mature deliberation, whose advice will be candidly given, whose advice I may safely follow! No.—The ministerial journals are “subsidised” and “affiliated presses;” and the editors, “unprincipled men—supporting the administration for *wages*—prostituting themselves, by inventing abusive epithets, and applying them, without regard to decency or truth, to honorable and distinguished patriots and other good citizens:” and the opposition journals are “factious combination presses,” improved in their condition by that “arch-intriguer” Mr. Van Buren.

Left now to depend upon myself—floundering in a *Slough of Despond*, as incapable of being causewayed as that described in *the Pilgrim’s Progress*; and no kind *Help* coming to shew me the *steps* across the foul quagmire, which its own filth, always spewed up in stormy weather, had rendered hardly visible, or which through dizziness I had not seen; I at last determined to seek some guide to direct my course, in the *arguments* of the respective parties—but in vain. The disputants seem to agree in this *fundamental*—that every man ought to ascertain, as well as he can, on which side the majority is likely to be, and to vote with the majority. I have heard many persons express the strongest indignation at the bare suggestion of such a rule of conduct: they repel with scorn, the recommendation, to vote *for* the Candidate they think ought *not* to be elected, or to vote *against* the Candidate they think *ought* to be elected, merely because they think the one will *not be* and the other *will be* elected, as a direct invitation to them to vote against their consciences: they say, that those who give such advice, plainly regard

the good people of the United States, as knaves or fools, or both; and that such advice is the more provoking, as it comes from persons, who are all the while telling us (as if we did not know without being told) that we are the most virtuous and enlightened people on earth. This indignation may be reasonable enough in those who think, that the Sovereignty does, in fact as well as in theory, reside in the PEOPLE. But to a man, who believes (as I do) that all the active efficient attributes of Sovereignty reside in the PRESS (for why? the *Press* can do no wrong; that is, it is accountable to no earthly tribunal; which I take to be the sure test of Sovereignty)—to a poor fellow of this creed, and so sadly perplexed as I am, the question is properly put, and the debate properly addressed, Which Candidate is likely to get the majority? At any rate, (for all I have seen) this is the only question, on which either party has pretended to offer any thing like argument. I wish I had found the argument on either side, as forcible as I feel it to be pertinent. The opposite propositions contended for, are these:—*Mr. Adams's friends* affirm, that he has always had a decided majority of the nation in his favor, and that majority has increased and is increasing. *General Jackson's friends* say, that the fate of the present administration is sealed; that it is now reduced to a certainty, that General Jackson must get the majority; nay, that Mr. Adams was elected by the House of Representatives at first, against the known wishes of a majority of the people—to prove which last point, though it be not to the present purpose, they appeal to some facts, which would be very imposing, if three-fifths of our Southern slaves were not counted, which Mr. Adams's friends say, instead of being counted, ought to be discounted. But now for the *arguments* on the main question: Which *will* get the majority? How shall I express my disap-

pointment and chagrin, when I found those arguments on both sides most exactly balanced; indeed, to my simple perceptions, not only *like*, but *identical*. Thus, the congressional election in Kentucky having resulted in the election of a majority of Jacksonians, the ministerialists went to work, and proved, by arithmetical calculations, that Kentucky will yet give her undivided electoral vote to Mr. Adams; calculations, which their opponents laughed to scorn. Shortly afterwards, the Maryland elections came on; and the people of that state elected a decided majority of friends of the administration to their House of Delegates; upon which the Jacksonians resorted to the same process of calculation, of which in the Kentucky case they had demonstrated the fallacy, to prove, that a majority of the electoral votes of Maryland will be given to Gen. Jackson. The Pennsylvania election quickly followed; and, according to the best information I can obtain, the Jacksonians have succeeded by a vast majority; but the ministerialists demonstrate by figures, a gain of strength to their party; a gain, so great and so rapidly increasing, that they very reasonably expect the whole electoral vote of Pennsylvania for Mr. Adams. Last came the New Jersey election: the people elected a decided majority of Mr. Adams's friends to both Houses of their Legislature: but the Jacksonians have demonstrated to me, by as fair an estimate as ever I saw, that *they* may fairly claim the electoral vote of New Jersey. The New York election is going on: both parties are equally confident; and whatever be the result, I doubt not we shall have the same series of calculations repeated. All these calculations, and all the counter-calculations, are based upon the same rule of political arithmetic; and, as the parties came to such opposite results, I resolved to examine the rule itself, to see whether it was correct in

principle: and then I found, that the only rule resorted to on both sides, was that which is sometimes called *the rule of position*, and sometimes *the rule of false*. I then declared that I would vote with the majority of the people of Virginia; that is (as I thought certainly) for Gen. Jackson; but I was told by the most intelligent friends of Mr. Adams I have heard speak on the subject, that a great reaction has taken place in Virginia, and there is good reason to believe that her vote will be given to him; at the same time, the Jacksonians say, that Virginia will vote for Gen. Jackson, as surely as that the sun will rise to-morrow. "Well," said I, "let us wait till the legislative caucus shall be held next winter: I will be resolved by that"—"Softly," say my ministerial friends: "put no trust in that caucus: the unequal representation in the House of Delegates, disqualifies that body from indicating the general sentiment of the people: besides, all caucuses are under sentence of damnation: be guided by the pro-Adams and anti-Jackson convention, which we have called to meet on the 8th of January." Well, I am now convinced, that the convention of delegates from the counties for this special purpose, which delegates any fifty, ten or two men may appoint for each county, is as fair (fairer I cannot think it) a representative of the sentiment of Virginia, as a caucus of members of Assembly. But I cannot, for the life of me, discern the difference in principle, between a *convention* of members of Assembly called a *caucus*, and a *caucus* of Adams-delegates called a *convention*—How the one is less an *unauthorised meeting* than the other—How either can pretend a right, on this occasion, to represent the people, or to dictate to them—Or why both have not an equal right to concert an electoral ticket. But this is not my affair: the *caucus* and

the *convention* will be sure to disagree, and I shall be left where I am.

My resolution was at one time well nigh fixed to vote for Mr. Adams, by an ingenious suggestion of one of my ministerial friends—that I could not do better than to take the *Uti possidetis* as my principle of conduct; that is, as he expounded it, that I ought to vote for the person already in office: this he commended to me, as a common principle of choice with *Virginians*, in all their elections, (which I knew to be true); and therefore, he argued, it must be a wise one. But, unhappily, I met with a Jacksonian, at the next turn, who insisted, that the proper principle to act on, is the *status quo ante bellum*: that the question ought now to be decided, as it ought to have been decided in 1825: Gen. Jackson had the plurality of votes; he was certainly the choice of the people; Mr. Adams acquired the possession of power by fraud, which is worse than no possession at all; and, consequently, I ought to give my vote *now* for the man who ought to have been elected *then*.—In all my troubles, I have encountered nothing that so confounded my faculties, as the relative merit of these two principles of the *Uti possidetis* and the *status quo ante bellum*.

As a last resort, I resolved to find out on which side the old republicans, and on which side the old federalists (parties which I perfectly understand) are ranged; and to determine *by lot* which of them I should unite with. Alas! I find them, like the combined fleets of France and Spain, at the battle of Trafalgar, arranged promiscuously, *without any regard to order of national squadron*.

Which ever way I turn my eyes, new difficulties rise before me, new perplexity confounds me—I envy the happy decision of mind of two of my neighbors, which has enabled them to determine without the least difficulty,

what I cannot, with the utmost pains, determine at all—namely, which of the candidates to vote *against*. I was the other day inquiring of them (as I am always inquiring of every body) how they intended to vote, in the hope of finding out how I should vote myself. One of them told me, he had made up his mind, long ago, to vote *against* Gen. Jackson (of course *for* Mr. Adams) because he understood Gen. Jackson had as good as advised Mr. Monroe, to take federalists into his cabinet, and he verily believed that advice had prompted Mr. Monroe to appoint Mr. Adams secretary of state. And the other said, he was firmly resolved to vote *against* Mr. Adams (of course *for* Gen. Jackson) because Mr. Adams had justified Gen. Jackson's conduct in the Seminole war.

Give me leave now to express a few opinions of my own, upon which I set a peculiar value, because I have entertained them, without any very material change, for full fifteen days.

I. It is my humble opinion, that the friends of the candidates, respectively, ought to abate somewhat of their panegyrics, and their enemies somewhat of the substance, and more of the violence, of their censures—For example,

I think, that *Mr. Adams's friends* ought not to give him quite so much credit for his abandonment of the federal party in 1807—because it seems to me (considering that federal votes are votes, and that he will not have a great many votes to spare) that they ought to be wary not to offend the federalists; and because it cannot be prudent to remind the public, that Mr. Adams's conversion was from the weaker to the stronger party, and not gradual or measured, but sudden and absolute, as if it had been worked by a miracle. They ought not to dwell so much upon his skill in diplomacy; because the public seems resolved to suspend its judgment on this head, until the secret history of the treaty of Ghent shall be published, to establish his claim to supe-

rior excellence in this line of public service. Their praises of his literary attainments should be more nicely measured, than they have hitherto been; for his *toasts* are certainly the worst that have ever been given or drunk, and his Baltimore speech no better; and this implies a defect, which must be allowed to detract a great deal from the merit of any American scholar, orator or statesman. On the other hand, *Mr. Adams's enemies* ought to say no more about the Billiard table: it is a very small matter, at the most; and, until some of his friends thought it necessary to lay the blame of that transaction on one of his sons, I never could see any great harm in it; for, I understand, the Virginia statutes against gaming are not in force in Washington. They ought no longer to taunt him with the story about Mrs. Moulson's rent; for that is a case for a court and jury; and no fair man ought to judge of it, without having all the witnesses confronted and cross-examined before him—petulance of temper is neither dishonesty nor meanness. They ought not to persist in accusing him with reviving the exploded doctrine of *the divine right of kings*: I am convinced the man meant no more than to express his sense of the religious obligation of his oath of office—which, I hope, is no unpardonable heresy. They ought not to harp any longer upon the colonial trade and the Panama mission; as I doubt not he is by this time a sincere penitent in regard to both.

The *friends of Gen. Jackson* ought not to insist that he is the Hero of two wars: because, if they can prove the fact, his enemies will probably demonstrate by figures, that he is superannuated. They ought not to claim for him the *whole* honor of the victory of New-Orleans: let him have the largest share that ever was awarded to a commander in chief; but reserve some part, to be divided among the officers and soldiers that fought under him. Especially I pray them,

never again to call him "another WASHINGTON:" it sounds like blasphemy: the two men stand in contrast to each other, not in comparison. *Gen. Jackson's enemies*, if they be also *friends of Mr. Adams*, ought not to say another word about the Seminole war; since they can, by no possibility, avoid implicating Mr. Adams in the blame. They ought not now to insist upon calling the general to too strict an account of his administration of martial law at New-Orleans, lest they implicate the Executive and Congress of the day—the great body of the people—and *the Editors of the National Intelligencer*, who wilfully shut their eyes to his proceedings at the time, because (I presume) it was then neither courtly nor popular to open their lips. I think they ought not to give implicit faith to the story of the duel, as their newspapers have reported it: I must believe there is some mistake or exaggeration on that subject. And if they will insist that the general cannot *spell*, they ought to know, that so neither could Marlborough, according to Lord Chesterfield, nor Buonaparte, according to Walter Scott.

II. I think the *friends of each* candidate ought to exercise a little more charity towards *the friends of the other*.

For instance, the *friends of Gen. Jackson* ought not to insist, that Mr. Buchanan's evidence convicts Mr. Clay of that corrupt log-rolling bargain; because it is obvious Mr. B. did not so understand his own evidence; and because they ought now, in prudence, to go upon the circumstantial evidence—wherein (I am told) they have an undeniable text of law to stand on—namely, that when the direct evidence of the only persons supposed to be privy to a transaction, fails to furnish proof, circumstances are the very best evidence.

The *friends of Mr. Adams* ought no longer to say that the members of Congress in opposition to the existing administration, are *hungry for office*—Does not the President

hold in his own hands all the loaves and fishes? would not Hunger naturally go to him? Is it thought, that he would be so hard hearted as to refuse them a morsel of bread for love or money? Is there no talent in the opposition, that he would gain to his side if he could?

III. I beseech the editors of newspapers, one and all, to speak more reverently of each other. I fear, if they go on much longer, at the rate they have done for some time past, they will destroy the happy influence of the daily press upon the public mind—and then, farewell to liberty! Even my veneration for them has been a little impaired by their fierce criminations and recriminations.

IV. I beg leave to suggest, that Mr. Rush and Mr. Southard ought to be abused a little. If they do not play, they hold the candle; and if they be not abused, they will not be praised; and so those two high officers of State will sink into utter insignificance. Yet I would have them abused with great moderation.—I recommend, in general, a change in the style of controversy; being apprehensive, that if its fury shall not soon abate, foreigners will conclude that we are a nation of knaves. I set great value on national character.

V. I am clearly of opinion, that, whether we regard this contest, in the one view, as a competition between the two most meritorious citizens in the nation, or in the other, as a scuffle for power between the two most depraved of mankind, yet there cannot but be some honest and sensible men among the *friends*, and among the *enemies*, of both the candidates.

VI. After long thought and some hesitation, I have come to a conclusion, that the peace and harmony of this United Federal Nation, are more important than the election of either candidate.

VII. Lastly, I implore the *friends of General Jackson*, to obtain from him, beforehand, an explicit declaration upon the following points—That, in case he shall be elected to the presidency, he will not, as commander in chief of the national forces, claim the right to suspend the writ of *Habeas Corpus*, whenever he shall think the public safety requires it—and that he will not hold the members of unauthorised conventions, assembled, during war or peace, to advise and in effect to direct the constituted authorities, amenable to military trial and execution, under the second article of war—or, at least, that he will exhaust the whole force of the article upon the members of the Hartford and Harrisburg conventions. This last is a very important matter: for in this age of conventions, if that article of war shall receive as latitudinous a construction as has been given to the constitution, only think how many will be involved in the guilt, and exposed to the punishment!

For myself, the malady of indecision, suspense of judgment and neutrality, is, I fear, fixed upon me, beyond all hope of remedy: and a very distressing malady it is. Buonaparte once told us, *there should be no neutrals*—which was generally thought to be contrary to the law of nations—but it is a settled point in the law of party. I pray it may be considered, that it is not my fault, that I am neutral. I have been all along doing my very best to take sides; and I shall not remit my exertions; but now that both parties have established committees of safety and *vigilance* in every town and county, how am I to shew the least inclination to either, without being instantly detected by the other, and brought back by force or persuasion?

CHRISTOPHER QUANDARY.

Essex County, Nov. 9, 1827.



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